# The Progressive Review

Nbr 300 October 1991


# Letter to Moscow

**Dear Mike and/or Boris,**

Excuse the first names but I understand that you want to become more Americanized and we use first names the way you use *comrade,* including the subtlety that a *comrade* is not always a comrade.

This Americanization business is tricky. There is no one American way of doing anything, only an American way of letting things happen. Much of America's success to date can be traced to one simple rule: don't make too many rules. Much of America's failure to date has come from ignoring that rule.

Think of America not as a system but as an environment and you'll begin to get the hang of it.

Sadly, Americans aren't taking very good care of their political environment these days. They still talk about political freedom and free enterprise, but those in power increasingly have something else on their minds.

Thus, you should be careful when you go to George Bush for advice about democracy or Harvard for ideas about your economy. Neither has any great interest in freedom and a great deal of interest in getting people to do things just their way.

You've probably figure that out about Bush already. Bush, after all, is currently under congressional investigation to find out if he and Reagan stole the 1980 election. He's shrouded his government with more secrecy than any peacetime president in history and he has seldom met a human right he likes.

If you really want to find out about democracy go to a town meeting in Vermont. Watch a baseball game, the sport that perhaps best blends the democratic ideals of individuality and community. Spend some time in one of those wacky computer software firms where no idea is considered too wild to examine. Listen to jazz and note how each musician is allowed extreme freedom during a solo and yet how conscientiously they back up the other musicians when it's their turn.

Democracy is not the answer, only an excellent way of finding answers. If you presume to have too many answers, you'll start acting like George Bush and not be very democratic at all.

Of course, since there's no patent on Americanism, anyone can claim it for their own. Huey Long, a very American politician in the best and worst sense, once said that when fascism came to these shores it would come in the guise of Americanism.

Remember also that your goal should be the American ideal, not American practice. If you copy our current behavior you'll end up in as much trouble as we are. One of our historians has said that early America invented every important new political institution of that time -- and none since.

So if you want to Americanize, there's no better way to start than at the beginning. Read Paine, Thoreau, Emerson and, of course, Thomas Jefferson. Enjoy not only their wisdom, but their idiosyncrasies and their failings. It will give you hope. Mike already has a leg up on Jefferson. Jefferson was a slave-owner, who attempted unsuccessfully to abolish slavery. Mike was a communist, but he got rid of *his* demon.

Thomas Jefferson, like most politicians, preached better than he practiced, but he had some pretty wise things to say. For example, Jefferson knew that all governments fail us, even the one he helped designed. Writing early of the need to establish the rights of citizens, he said:

"From the conclusion of this war we shall be going downhill. It will not then be necessary to resort every moment to the people for support. They will be forgotten, therefore, and their rights disregarded... The shackles, therefore, which shall not be knocked off... will be made heavier and heavier, till our rights shall revive or expire in a convulsion."

You should also jump ahead a hundred years or so and read how right Jefferson was. Mark Twain and H.L. Mencken will give you a good feeling for how greed and foolishness corrupted the American ideal over the decades. To give you an idea of how perceptive Mencken was, back in 1930 he wrote that communism "will probably disappear altogether when the Russian experiment comes to a climax, and bolshevism either converts itself into a sickly imitation of capitalism or blows up with a bang. The former seems more likely."

Then leap forward and read Martin Luther King and learn how the sturdy American ideal could withstand the worst abuse and still permit dreams again. America's

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history has always been one of saints and scoundrels and the difficulty of telling them apart, especially when they were the same people.

Here's a good American saying: *necessity is the mother of invention.* Things aren't working out quite like you planned it, but there's at least a chance that you'll be forced to invent some good ideas as a result.

The nation state was never much to brag about. Its major contributions to human history has been incredible death and destruction. After World War II, nation states started to disintegrate as institutions that had some of the characteristics of countries began to take their place. The United Nations, NATO, the World Bank and multinational corporations all helped to weaken the idea of a nation long before the Armenians and the Muscovites got restless. Sure, you and we thought we were the most powerful nations in human history but that's because we only counted the assets and didn't consider what the charade was costing us. I mean, couldn't you use some of that money you sent to Cuba now? And it would be kind of nice to replay Vietnam all over again knowing what we know now.

So, Mike, don't feel too bad over the break-up of the Soviet Union. Nobody really needs it anymore. Besides, the real struggle in the world today has become that between the peoples of the world and their increasingly authoritarian, corrupt, and unproductive governments. Your country was one of the first to collapse in the wake of this conflict, but that just gives you a headstart into the new frontier.

Unfortunately, most of the people who might advise you on where to go have spent much of their life figuring out how to increase centralized authority. Their expertise won't help you much now.

The people who *can* help are to be found in little noticed corners. For example, have you talked to the Swiss about democratic confederations? They've got over five hundred years of experience. Have you checked out any books on Green philosophy or read the works of E.F.Schumacher or *Human Scale* by Kirkpatrick Sale? Have you looked at novel ways to make regions works such as Mondragon in Spain?

You're sort of on your own here, but remember: they don't teach devolution at Harvard and they don't practice it in Washington. You'll have to look elsewhere.

Finally, about this economics business. You've got keep a sharp eye on those Harvard types and the Wall Streeters and the Fortune 500 experts. These guys have spent the past decade figuring out how to borrow money to buy corporations rather than to make things. As a result, as one of our Democratic presidential candidates said the other day, "The cold war is over and Japan won."

As far as Harvard goes, Jonathan Rowe, in a *Washington Monthly* article on Poland last November put it nicely:

"Though any number of Western advisers have had a hand in this program, the one who has gotten the most attention is Jeffrey Sachs, the globe-trotting whiz kid from Harvard. Sachs preaches a kind of macro-economic machismo. Raise prices, hike interest rates, welcome bankruptcies and unemployment as evidence that the fat of the communist years is sweating off the body economic. 'Western observers should not over-dramatize layoffs and bankruptcies,' Sachs wrote in *The Economist* back in January. 'Poland, like the rest of Eastern Europe, now has too little unemployment, not too much."

This is the sort of Cambridge machismo that got us into years of trouble in Vietnam. Nothing is more dangerous than a Harvard professor proving his virility in national or international policy.

I understand they're trying to get you to buy something called the *market system.* Back before the Reagan administration they always called it the *free market system* but increasingly the adjective is being dropped. That makes sense because the only thing free its most ardent advocates want is their own way. And mostly, under Reagan and



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Bush, they've been getting it. Peter Ustinov said the other day that monetarism invites the money changers into the temple and then sells them the temple.

At its core, the market system is nothing more than what humans have been doing since they first traded a stone axe blade for a hunk of meat. There is nothing mystical, sacred or moral about it. And above all, there's nothing in the US Constitution about it. The idea that capitalism and democracy are inexorably intertwined is one of the worst conceits of our business classes.

It ain't so. For example, most people in this country were self-employed well into the 19th century. Businesses that sprung up didn't flourish on competition because there often wasn't any. You didn't need two banks or two drug stores in the average town because they weren't needed. Prices and business ethics were not regulated by the marketplace but by a complicated cultural code and the fact that the banker had to go to church with his depositors. If you wanted to form a corporation you had to get a state charter and prove it was in the public interest and necessity.

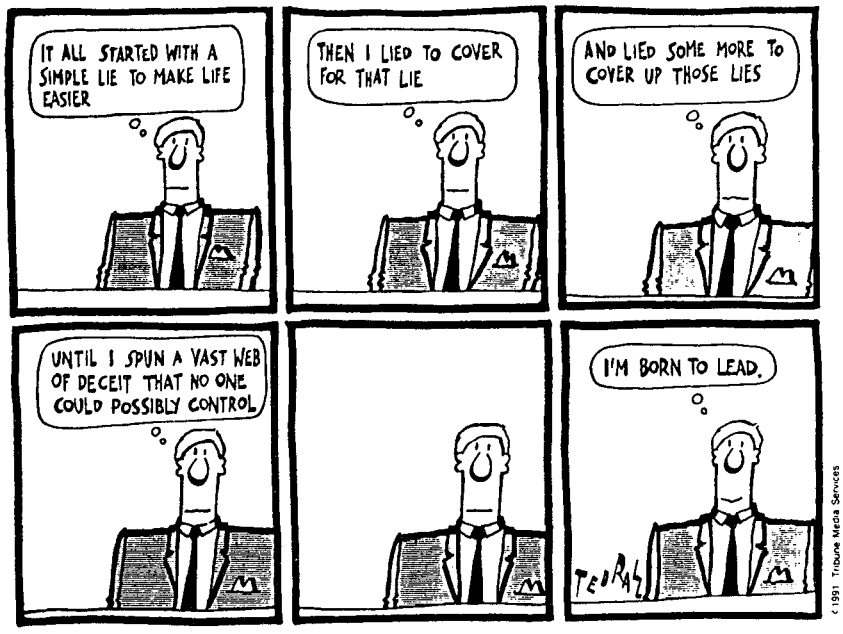
With the industrial revolution that all changed. By the end of the 19th century the Supreme Court had declared corporations to be *persons* and entitled to the same protections as real people. And the myth of the virtue of competition was blooming, justifying one of the great rapacious eras of American business.

Over the years it's gotten worse, until sometime in the 1980s even the economic hustlers had to admit tacitly that enterprise isn't very free anymore.

Not only isn't it free, it's not working well either, a fact that has been neatly obscured by constant and largely irrelevant comparison to communism.

I'll tell you a secret, which maybe you know already. Our system is on the skids, too, another ungainly monster of an economic system based too much on greed, centralization and unfairness. So if you look for salvation in our way of doing business you may only be buying yourself a few years grace.

I got the impression back when Mike was flailing about looking for an alternative economic approach


IT ALL STARTED WITH A SIMPLE LIE TO MAKE LIFE EASIER
THEN I LIED TO COVER FOR THAT LIE
AND LIED SOME MORE TO COVER UP THOSE LIES
UNTIL I SPUN A VAST WEB OF DECEIT THAT NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY CONTROL
I'M BORN TO LEAD.
TOLES
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that he recognized the problem. Perhaps it has dawned on you that to do it right you're going to have to replace both communism and capitalism with something better.

Again you'll have to do a lot of looking. The Swedish model has much to offer -- although it, too, as the Swedish voters have suggested, has its excesses. There is the cooperative system of Mondragon, Spain, and the mini-industries of Bologna. Even in this country, you'll find ideas worth considering. There are big consumer cooperatives like Land of Lakes Butter and the United Services Automobile Association that thrive happily amongst the conventional capitalists. The town of Green Bay, Wisconsin, holds its professional football team as a cooperative. And, of course, in many small communities the farmer's co-op is taken for granted as a major economic unit. These are, I hasten to say, real consumer-owned co-ops where real people rather than party bureaucrats make the decisions.

In the matter of money, it may help to know that in the early stages of this country regional and local currency was common, meeting the needs of communities that had labor and products but lacked the paper by which to evaluate them. America didn't even have a central banking system until 1913.

In more recent times, experiments with local currencies have had surprising success.

Let me give you one small example. During our current recession, the lease for a certain restaurant in Great Barrington, Mass., expired and the local bank wouldn't lend restauranteur Frank Tortrello money to move across the street. So Frank decided to print his own. He called them Deli Dollars. Each sold for $9 and could be redeemed for $10 worth of food after six months. Not only did the idea provide Frank with enough money to make his move, but it spread throughout the community. A local farm issued notes with the slogan "In Farms We Trust" featuring the head of a cabbage instead of the head of a president. New restaurants followed with their own currency and the local bills started showing up everywhere, including the church collection plate.

Remember that money is just another way of accounting for the trading of time and goods. American farmers do this trading all the time without ever writing it down or exchanging pieces of paper. One imaginative American, Edgar Cahn, has come up with a system under which people can earn time credits by assisting the elderly, to be redeemed in services when the creditor becomes aged. It's all done on computers. And there are a number of places in America and Canada where they're using 'green dollars' -- no bills or notes are issued, just computer records of services provided and received.

So don't just think of America as a place built with money. In reality



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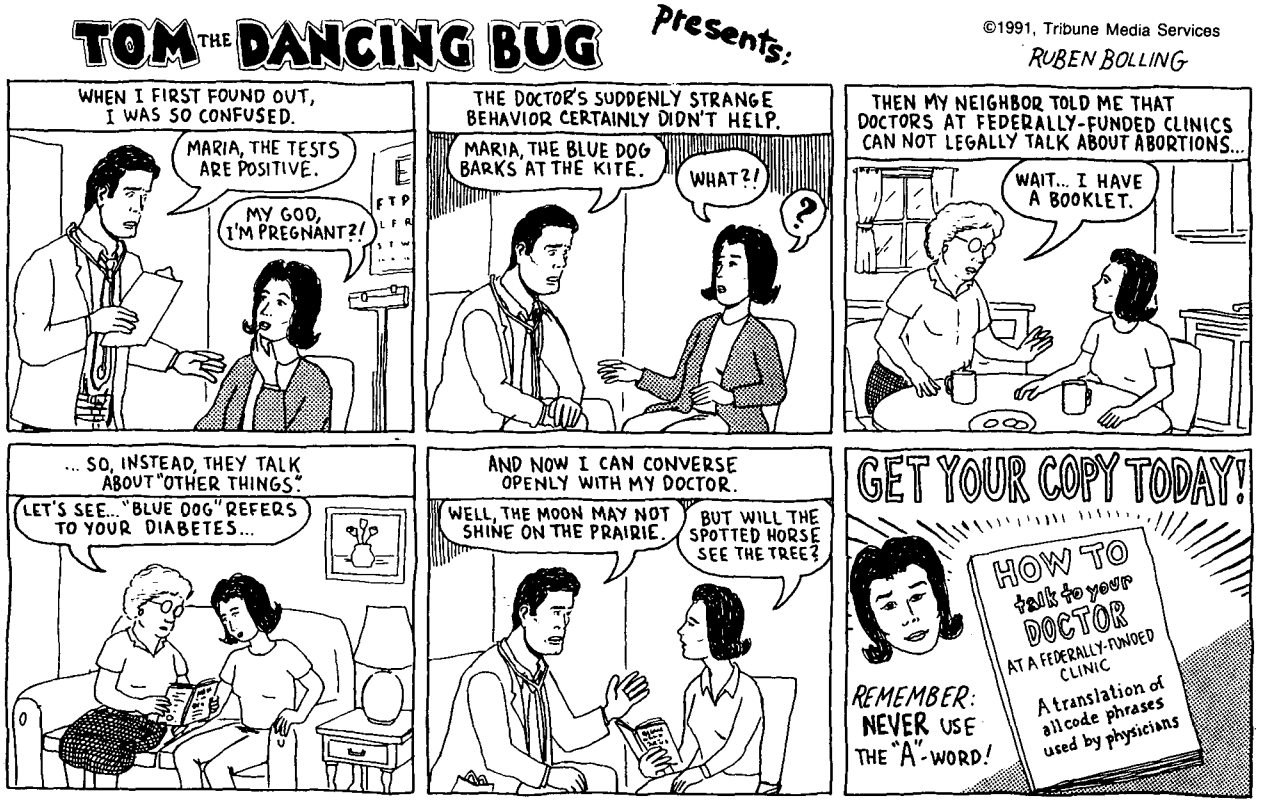
TOM THE DANCING BUG Presents:
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RUBEN BOLLING
WHEN I FIRST FOUND OUT, I WAS SO CONFUSED.
MARIA, THE TESTS ARE POSITIVE.
MY GOD, I'M PREGNANT?!
THE DOCTOR'S SUDDENLY STRANGE BEHAVIOR CERTAINLY DIDN'T HELP.
MARIA, THE BLUE DOG BARKS AT THE KITE.
WHAT?!
?
THEN MY NEIGHBOR TOLD ME THAT DOCTORS AT FEDERALLY-FUNDED CLINICS CAN NOT LEGALLY TALK ABOUT ABORTIONS...
WAIT... I HAVE A BOOKLET.
... SO, INSTEAD, THEY TALK ABOUT "OTHER THINGS."
LET'S SEE... "BLUE DOG" REFERS TO YOUR DIABETES...
AND NOW I CAN CONVERSE OPENLY WITH MY DOCTOR.
WELL, THE MOON MAY NOT SHINE ON THE PRAIRIE.
BUT WILL THE SPOTTED HORSE SEE THE TREE?
GET YOUR COPY TODAY!
HOW TO talk to your DOCTOR AT A FEDERALLY-FUNDED CLINIC
A translation of all code phrases used by physicians
REMEMBER: NEVER USE THE "A"-WORD!

it was also built by a lot of people who found some good ways to function without it. One of those ways was to help one another. Which is why some Washingtonians still call a volunteer rescure squad before they call 911. They know it will get there faster and do the job better. As Rowe put it: "Free market ideology stresses the impersonal nature of contracts. Life is a succession of deals, all to maximize personal benefits." And despite what you hear, it's not the way a lot Americans view life, nor practice it.

On the other hand, another great American prototype is the snake oil salesman. We spend a lot of time in this country trying to fool each other. We call it marketing. So be careful when you make your deals and listen to your American experts. Keep in mind what a real American expert, a southern farmer, told his son: "Trust everyone but get cash for your cotton."

I wish you luck, guys. If it comes to you, then maybe in a few years Americans will be coming to Moscow for advice. Because we need help, too. -- *Sam*

# The nominee's new clothes

It would appear that, as far as much of the Senate is concerned, the standard for judges is about the same as it is for criminal defendants. If you can't find them guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, you've got to confirm them.

That's not what was intended when the Senate was given the job of confirming the President's top appointments. Here's what Hamilton had to say about the subject.:

*To what purpose then require the cooperation of the Senate? I answer, that the necessity of their concurrence would have a powerful, though, in general, a silent operation. It would be an excellent check upon a spirit of favoritism in the President, and would tend greatly to prevent the appointment of unfit characters from State prejudice, from family connection, from personal attachment, or from a view to popularity.*

****The possibility of rejection would be a strong motive to care in proposing. *** [The President] would be both ashamed and afraid to bring forward for the most distinguished or lucrative stations, a candidate who had no other merit than that of coming from the same State to which he particularly belonged, or of being in some way or other personally allied to him, or of possessing the necessary insignificance and pliancy to render them the obsequious instruments of his pleasure.*

The *New York Times* put it well in a recent editorial:

"Contrary to theories that the Senate's 'advise and consent role is limited to measuring a nominee's technical fitness, the confirmation power is as broad the President' power to nominate. No less than the chief executive, the senators can weigh policy and ideology."

And they certainly used to. Judge Hiller Zobel of the Massachusetts Supreme Court notes in a recent issue of *American Heritage* that of 97 Supreme Court nominations through 1916, 31 died in the Senate.

Hamiilton apparently could not envision a president so without shame or a Senate so meek. He fully



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expected the Senate to exercise its independent judgement. Just as a bill requires the president's signature, so an appointment requires the Senate's approval -- and for much the same reason: a check on the excesses of power.

But while George Bush vetoes freely, the Senate treats every exercise of its constitutional prerogatives as a threat to national stability.

Thus we end up with the absurdity of a vacuous political hack being nominated to the highest court and every organization and politician and journalist in the country acting as though there some great philosophical issue involved.

The nominee parades upon Capitol Hill and no one dares to point out the most salient fact: namely that he's not wearing any clothes.

Let us return briefly to that happy time a few months back when hardly anyone had heard of Clarence Thomas. Let us then imagine that we surveyed members of the Senate, law professors and presidents of state bar assocations as to their suggestions for the court.

After we had collated the lists, where would Clarence Thomas have ranked? 105th? 256th? Well, that would be a charitable guess.

So who is this guy anyway and where did he come from?

The answer to the latter question becomes fairly simple when you realize that out of 73 judicial nominations in his first two years in office, Bush named only two blacks -- including Thomas.

So, given that Bush was clearly out shopping for someone to make him look less like the time-warped white preppie that he is, he didn't have much a pool to draw from.

The mindset of the Bush leaguers and their allies was nicely revealed in an interview on the *David Brinkley Show* the Sunday before Thomas was nominated. As reported by *Spy,* Sen. Orin Hatch was pressed by Brinkley to name some potential nominees. He said:

"Well, you have -- you'd have to start with people like Ken Starr, the current solicitor general. And I think the president will have to look at minorities, such as our person on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals --- *[hemming and hawing]*-- Fernando Fernandez I believe is his name. There's a fellow down on a district court down in Texas. Edith Jones, a wonderful woman jurist from the South. You could go on and on. Our current black judge on the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, he'd be a terrific choice."

Hatch couldn't get the latino judge's name right ((it's Ferdinand not *Fernando)* and he couldn't even remember the name of the guy he has been so assiduously defending the past few weeks. But he sure knew what color he was.

There is good reason that Thomas's name didn't spring to mind. Other than being a black Republican (which is rare) and having been poor (which is common and more so under Reagan and Bush), Thomas's record inspires instant amnesia. His post-outhouse days can be summarized as follows:

He once worked for Senator John Danforth, then Missouri's attorney general and we know he gained Danforth's undying loyalty. But what did he actually do? The high point of his career was winning a case in support of the governor's decision to abolish vanity licence plates.

With this triumph behind him he moved on to be counsel for Monsanto, where, as *Newsweek* put it, "he learned the law of pesticides, fungicides and rodinicides."

Washington is full of lawyers who understand such matters. Many, with an absolute straight face, claim to be working in environmental law. What they fail to reveal is on which side they are working.

Having learned how to keep America safe for chemical companies, Thomas came to Washington and got the affirmative action slot at the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. A few highlights of his tenure:

- The number of class action suits handled dropped sharply as the EEOC concentrated on individual cases of discrimination. This meant, as the *Atlantic* noted, "Thomas would require every woman or black whom that employer had discriminated against to come to the government and prove his or her allegation." If Thomas's views had prevailed in an earlier Supreme Court, there would still be some black students suing for admission to Little Rock High School.
- In 1988, the General Accounting Office found that a large number of cases were closed -- from 40 to 87 percent -- - because cases were not adequately investigated in the field.
- The backlog and time to process cases both rose under Thomas.
- Even the Civil Rights Commission, despite its emasculation by Reagan, felt called to report in 1987 that "on a number of issues requiring regulatory activity, the EEOC to date has accomplished very little."

All of which made Thomas just the sort of guy Bush wanted as a federal judge. Since then Thomas has written 20 routine decisions, which reveal little except a predisposition against workers and in favor of large corporations.

This is not the resume of a man you go to for expositions on natural law. It is that of a wardheeler who hit it lucky, a man who, in Hamilton's phrase, possesses the "necessary insignificance and pliancy to render" himself "the obsequious instrument" of the president's pleasure.



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# Flotsam & Jetsam

Editors would be wise to exercise a bit more caution in their current crusade against plagiarism. Journalists, after all, are people who take somebody else's words, thoughts and actions and publish them under their own byline. Plagiarism is the essence of the reporter's craft.

To imagine a media without plagiarism is a fearful thought. How would we know what the White House or Senate is 'expected' to do, what would fill the huge gaps left by the loss of perception pieces, and how could the average columnist meet deadlines without liberally stealing ideas, facts and phrases from anonymous sources over lunch?

One of the pleasures of journalism is the lack of footnotes. .By blending effortlessly what we journalists have learned on our own with what somebody said that sounded good, a news story becomes readable on the subway, which is not usually the case with an academic journal. To cite all one's sources in a newspaper would be tedious; in broadcasting it would be impossible. Besides it would be like letting the audience sit behind the magician. Without its illusions, there would be little left to the trade.

I have always taken a fairly tolerant view of journalists who steal my stuff, believing that plagiarism is the highest form of flattery. And I respect those who have devised reasonable guidelines such as the writer who used three of my one-liners in a single column but only gave me credit for one. He explained that he felt that he could only quote me once, but thought the other quips were too good to die merely for lack of attribution.

Here was a man with a well-conceived ethical code. The editorial prigs currently conducting the war against plagiarism are another matter. This seems to be one more instance of the media desperately trying to prove to a declining audience that they truly are superior beings. Having driven their competition out of town some years back, they are forced to contrive such mechanisms as ombudsmen and anti-plagiarism crusades to reassure us.

There is, further, more than a touch of insincerity here. Does anyone really believe that reporters have independent knowledge of much about which they write? The projection for next quarter's economy comes not from the journalist's spreadsheet but from often unidentified experts or friends. Take away George Will's anonymous sources of erudition and the man would simply wither away.

Besides, if the press wishes to deal with the most consistent and flagrant example of plagiarism to appear in print or on the air, it will have to stop quoting politicians. I await the day when the New York Times or Washington Post writes, "White House ghostwriter Oscar Pfumnagel, in a speech read for him by President George Bush, said today..."

Ellen Goodman lived through Hurricane Bob on Casco Bay and saw in it a metaphor for the recent events in the Soviet Union. Since Bob was little more than a good northerly blow by the time it got east of Portland, the analogy seems somewhat demeaning to the Soviet people. The column was headlined 'Sea Change,' a widely misused cliche which, in fact, means just the opposite of what most journalist think. It is a non-existent nautical or oceanographic event, and comes instead from Shakespeare who used it to describe bones slowly disintegrating at the bottom of the sea.

Among others who got a bit hysterical about the storm was Jock McKernan, the Maine governor, who (from the safety of a conference in Washington state) in consultation with his civil defense chief (from a bunker well inland in Augusta), ordered an evacuation of all persons within a quarter mile of the shore.

This, as it turned out, put me within the perimeter of the governor's martial law. My first inclination was to ignore the order on the grounds that I should not be stampeded by an absentee blow-dried Republican, but a visit by the local volunteer fire department and loud-speaker imprecations from the town police -- which I viewed as proper authority -- encouraged me finally to evacuate.

My reticence was not unique. People in Maine are used to storms and have a pretty good idea how to behave in them without the gratuitous assistance of the governor. If he had limited his evacuation order to those in low-lying areas it would have made sense, but to tell people to leave perfectly safe homes and drive through falling limbs and trees to the shelter and Cheez Whiz sandwiches of the local high school seemed one more example of government by symbolism rather than substance.

The governor clearly wanted to be seen as a man of action and was probably also moved by the America's favorite ideology, namely liability limitation. In some communities recalcitrant citizens were even given liability waiver forms to sign. If you want to get an American's attention, threaten to take away the right to sue.

It must be said on the governor's behalf that during another hurricane some years back, a predecessor took a more laid-back attitude with disastrous consequences. Following Hurricane Carol in the fifties, Gov. John Reid toured the state by helicopter. After viewing orchards ruined, houses destroyed, and boats wrecked, he pronounced the scene not as bad as he had expected. A few months later he was replaced in office by a new Democrat named Edmund Muskie. So maybe you can't be too careful about these things.-- *S.S.*



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# The Weather Report

## Green party formed

After many months of debate, the US Greens have formed a national political party. The US Greens, formerly known as the Green Committees of Correspondence, lagged behind local Green activists who already hold elected office in about 13 cities, including Madison, Wisc., and San Diego, California. The Greens have 142 local chapters and 170 affiliated organizations in 46 states. In DC, the Greens have had a close but informal relationship with the DC Statehood Party and there are no plans for the Greens to form a separate party in the Capital.

Meanwhile, a national commission of NOW has recommended the establishment of a new party. The Commission for Responsive Democracy has formed a working group "to begin the platform, voter registration and recuitment, outreach, fundraising, candidate search, and research " necessary for the creation of the new party. Leaders of the working group are Dolores Huerta, Patrricia Ireland, Mel King, Sara Nelson, Ellie Smeal and Monica Faith Stewart.

## Rats, ragweed and cockroaches

According to a series of articles in *Science* magazine, an extinction crisis is upon us. We are creating a world that will eventually be dominated by "rats, ragweed and cockroaches" unless action is taken to reduce population growth, save wildlands and preserve species. The biologists who wrote the articles say that human activity is the main threat to other species. Biologists Paul Ehrlich of Stanford and Edward Wilson of Harvard call for a number of radical measures including a halt to all development activity on relatively undisturbed land:

"Every new shopping center built in the California chaparral, every hectare of tropical forest cut and burned, every swamp converted into a rice paddy or shrimp farm means less biodiversity."

The articles suggest that the world could lose at least a quarter of its species in the next fifty years if corrective action is not taken.

## People's ecology

Bad as such news is, there is increasing discussion of the fact that environmental groups tend to shortchange people as a species deserving a decent ecology as well. For example, while there is widespread attention paid to the danger to animals in Africa, a survey by PNS of 13 US-based environmental publications over the past year reveals that only one, World Watch, ran more than one feature-length stories on African famine.

Says Jonathan King, executive editor of the Sierra Club's magazine, "The World Wildlife Fund doesn't have a panda as its symbol for nothing. People will say 'aw' over a panda, but not a starving Ethiopian. And PNS quotes Jason Clay, director of Cultural Survival as pointing out that "in South America, the rate of genocide is faster than the rate of rainforest depletion. We;ve lost 33 percent of the cultural diversity there, versus 13 percent of the forests."

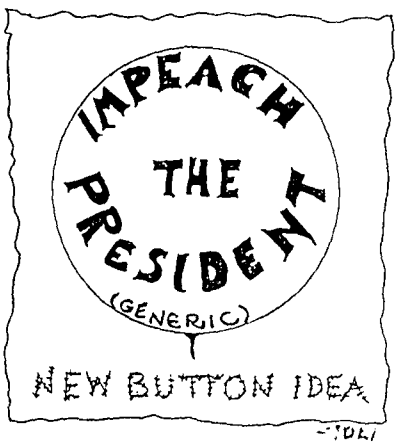
## Private spies

Just as the KGB is collapsing, America corporations seem ready and able to take its place. In August, the US government reported that it was seizing millions of dollars of illegal surveillance equipment that had been purchased at government expense by nuclear contractors.. According to Westinghouse, which has been accused of harassing whistleblowers at its Hanford, Wash., nuclear facility, government investigators found no evidence that the equipment had actually been used against whistleblowers. On the other hand, the *Spokane Chronicle* asked August 4: "How long must Hanford whistleblowers complain about job harassment by their superiors, intimidating burglaries of their homes, wiretaps of their telephones, surveillance by marked *** police cars and mysterious gray vehicles which tail them as they drive?..."

Meanwhile, in Cincinnati, we have the story of Proctor & Gamble using the local police force to find out who was leaking stories about management changes to the press.

But spying hasn't been completely privatized. It was recently revealed that the FBI kept a massive dossier on old-time California pol Jesse Unruh. By the time Big Daddy died in 1987, the file was 1,100 pages long. Said a representative of the FBI: "We are in the information business. If somebody is a lifetime politician, we are going to have to keep information on them for long periods, because they are going to be appointed to federal jobs or positions on the federal bench."

Finally, we have the Sept 15 story in the *New York Times* that reports that during most of the 80s, the Reagan administration intercepted and monitored numerous private discussions between congressional opponents of the war against Nicaragua. Former Rep. Mike Barnes says that ex-CIA chief William Casey, based on overheard conversations, tried to threaten Barnes to to mute his opposition to the war.



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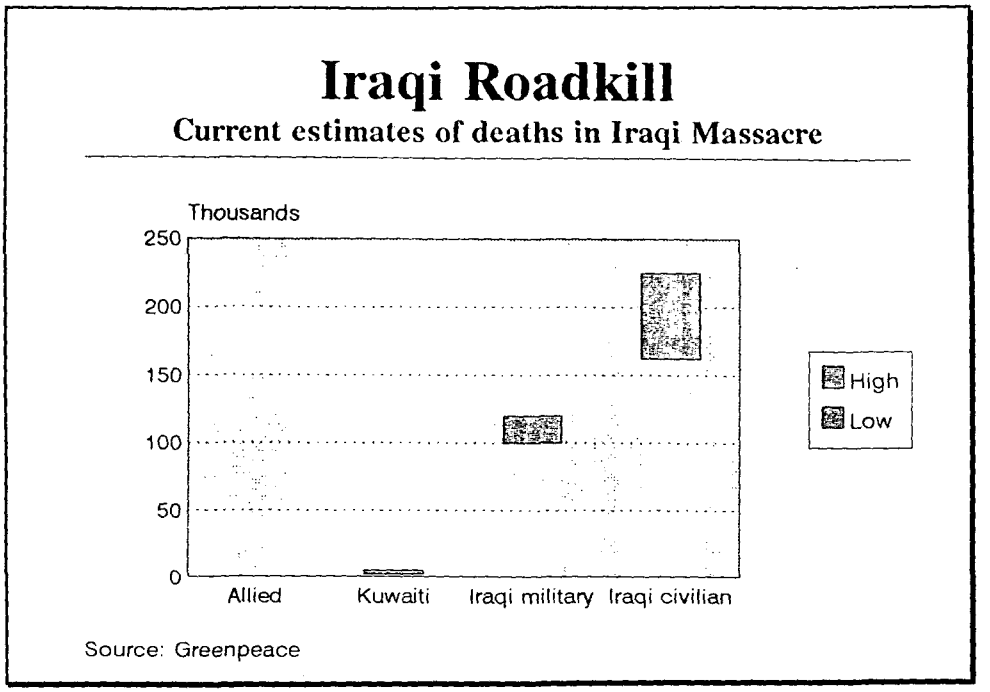


## Bush family news

According to *Mother Jones Magazine* , the Bush boys have Billy Carter all beat. Here's a short list of some of what George Bush's son's and sibs have been up to:

- Brother Prescott flew to Shanghai on the heels of the Tiananmen Square massacre to close a deal for an $18 million resort there. The Japanese firm that paid Prescott a quarter-million dollar consulting free is now under investigation for exchange-law violations and links to the Japanese mob.
- Brother Jonathan, whose east cost stock brokerage was fined in two states this year for violating registration laws, has been barred from general public trading in Massachusetts.
- Federal regulators gave son Neil the "mildest possible" penalty in the $1 billion failure of Silverado Banking -- a deal so sweet that he dropped his appeal.
- Son Jeb carved his own niche in the S&L bailout when the federal government paid off the $4 million he owed to a failed Florida thrift.

***

## October surprise

Things have been fairly quiet on the October Surprise front lately. The Village Voice claims that it has evidence that Richard Brenneke, one of the early sources of the story about the alleged manipulation of the Iranian hostage crisis for the benefit of the Reagan-Bush campaign, could not have been in Paris at the meetings where the Reagan-Bush deal supposedly took place. The article cites credit card records and other data to make its strong case against Brenneke. As we pointed out in the last issue, however, Brenneke has long been regarded -- even by those who believe the October Surprise deal occurred -- as an unreliable witness and the story in no way depends on his testimony. Still unanswered: how did Brenneke know facts that other more reliable sources confirm?

Meanwhile, there are unpleasant indications that Congress may be ready to take a fall in this fight despite the announcement of parallel Senate-House investigations. The Senate probe is headed by Terry Sanford, who chaired the committee that let Senator Alfonse D'Amato off the hook. In the House, Lee Hamilton -- as demonstrated in the Iran-Contra affair -- has all the zeal of a Labrador after three hours of chasing frisbees and actually opposed the idea of an investigation.

The media continues to shy away from the story. Short of an indictment or a videotape, the Washington press will protect its top sources to the last possible minute -- and then switch to fulminations about "betrayal of trust," i.e. leaving the sycophantic media with egg on its face.

Gone are the days when reporters expected the worst from every politician. Today, DC has become the only place in the country where skepticism towards the powerful is considered a sign of naivete.

Compare, for example, the media treatment of the William Smith case with that of the October Surprise. In the former, the lack of facts and/or smoking gun has been no hindrance to press coverage at all. No rumor, innuendo -- affecting either side --- is too unsubstantiated to report. The October Surprise story, on the other hand, is shunned despite the fact that Gary Sick has 14 more witnesses than does the prosecutor in the Smith case.



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As the *New Yorker* said last June: "The implications of this story, if it's true are vast. A small group of Americans with no position in the government, and no electoral mandate, essentially seized control of the foreign policy of the United States, and, for all practical purposes, the future leadership of the country, not to mention the fate of the fifty-two Americans being held hostage, was being negotiated in secret meetings with a handful of shady characters in a hotel room in Paris."

There also seems seem to be a pattern developing that suggests that the October Surprise was not an isolated case of election manipulation. There is, of course, the briefing books for Jimmy Carter that ended up in the Reagan campaign in time for the debates. Less well known is the fact that an inmate who had planned a conference call to journalists in 1988 to allege that he had once sold marijuana to Dan Quayle was summarily put in solitary just before the call. The inmate has sued and federal judge Harold Greene has refused to throw out the case.

Then there is story from AP that "the Treasury Department asked the FBI last fall to investigate allegations that regulators delayed until after Election Day 1988 " the closing of Denver's Silverado S&L where Bush son Neil was a director.

## Drug busts

Not content to test just for illegal drugs, the pissophiles are now looking for nicotine as well. An Indiana woman was fired earlier this year when a company drug test found nicotine in her urine. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* firms are now starting to regulate not only smoking, but weight and the amount of cholesterol, saturated fats, coffee and even fast foods their workers consume. Says the *Inquirer:* "Firms are making workers' private lives their business. "

A survey in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (Aug 90) found that college seniors who used drugs in 1989 were virtually indistinguishable in personality characteristics from nonusers. Studies in 1969 and 1978 found the same thing.

A GAO report finds that drug activity in Panama has increased since the ouster of Manuel Noriega. Not surprising, given that many of the leaders of the American-installed government had known drug links at the time Bush sent troops to put them in power.

Drug offenders comprise over half of all federal inmates and 23% of local jail populations according to Federal Prisons director Michael J. Quinine.

## The mediacracy

Attempting to explain why there was so much coverage in DC of the death of a child struck by lightning at the city's posh St. Alban's School, Washington Post ombudsman Richard Harwood said that "princes and paupers" do not rate equal time because the media are "economic enterprises" and "not social welfare agencies." He added that "social and economic distinctions *** are real. *** The opinions of the mighty carry more weight than the opinions of the meek." And the *Post* clearly intends to keep it thus.

The *Washington Post,* which likes to vogue as a sophisticated publication, recently ran a story by Dana Thompson that began:

"National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman Lynne Cheney was busy Thursday making phone calls to five of the country's most respected historians and humanitarians."

Here's a tip, Len: humanitarians write checks; humanists write books.

## Furthermore...

More tales of heroism from the Persian Gulf: According to *Newsday,* the First Infantry Division, in the first two days of the war, used tanks with plows and earth movers to "to bury hundred or thousands of Iraqi solders -- some still alive and firing their weapons -- in more than 70 miles of trenches, according to US Army officials." The Pentagon says the figures are "wildly, grossly exaggerated" but admitted that the practice had occurred to some extent.

Federal government intrusion into state affairs continues apace, blithely indifferent to intended constitutional restraints. Greenmail -- the practice of forcing states to take action on threat of losing federal funds is so common it is hardly noticed. Examples include the forced raising of the drinking age and lowering of speed limits as well as a law passed last year with little debate that requires states to suspend the driver's license of anyone convicted of *any* drug offense. States that exercise their constitutional prerogatives in such matters lose highway funds.

Now the *Washington Times* reports that states are furious with a new gimmick: mandating local expenditures for federal programs. Says the *Times:* "Essentially, Congress has been trying to keep the voters back home happy by approving more federal programs, but, lacking money to finance them, is ordering the states to come up with the cash." A report from the National Conference on State Legislatures says there are seven bills now before Congress that would

> Never was so much false arithmetic employed on any subject as that which has been employed to persuade nations that it is in their interest to go to war. Were the money which it has cost to gain *** a little town, or a little territory, the right to cut wood here or to catch fish there, expended in improving what they already possess, in making roads, opening rivers, building ports, improving the arts, and finding employment for the idle poor, it would render them much stronger, much wealthier and happier. -- *Thomas Jefferson in Notes on Virginia*



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In the interests of full disclosure and so forth, you should be aware that your editor is presently parking his political hopes with Senator Tom Harkin. You are warned, however, not to make too much of this fact. In the last campaign I supported, seriatim, four candidates including Mario Cuomo twice -- and all to no avail.

Nonetheless, Harkin has much to be said on his behalf, not the least of which is that he is getting Democrats excited again for the first time in a couple of decades. He is smart, votes right, and is willing to fight like a Democrat. Listening to Harkin reminds me why I got interested in politics in the first place.

Harkin's major defects include the populist's malady, namely the tendency to overstate an already good case. His considerable interest in human rights wanes when Mr. Shamir is involved and he is skittish about some issues, including gay rights.

But on the whole, his campaign has extraordinary potential to excite the cynical, motivate the apathetic and effectively challenge the political mob that has been running this country for far too long. --*S. S.*

cost states more than $1.6 billion for welfare, environmental education, voter registration, homelessness and healthcare. The 1990 budget cost the states some $17 billion in similar measures.

Those concerned that multiculturists have seized control of American education may be reassured to know that, according to sociology professor Todd Gitlin's count, only 24 of Berkeley's 1600 some regular faculty are in Afro-American and ethnic studies. The old dead white guys still have a pretty firm grip on things.

According to a Harris survey, 56% of Canadians believe only minor changes are needed in their health care system while the figure for Americans is 10%. 60% of Americans favor fundamental changes and 29% want a whole new system.

A year in prison is now more expensive than a year at Harvard. Looked at another way, DC spends $6500 a year to educate its students but $21,000 a year to keep them locked up.

Columnist William Raspberry recently quoted Andrew Rutherford, a law professor a the University of Southampton in England, as noting that the prison population in Europe has declined with no increase in criminality. There, a variety of alternatives are employed, including restitution, community service and therapy, including drug treatment. Speaking of European law officials, Raspberry says: "It isn't so much that they believe alternative treatment will make criminals better, as it is their certainty that incarceration will make them worse."

Sign of the times: in DC, where Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon has announced plans to lay off 2000 mid-level bureaucrats, the personnel director now has a bodyguard.

According to a report by the Feminist Majority Foundation, less than three percent of the top jobs at Fortune 500 companies were held by women in 1990.

Here's a goodie from the president's 1992 proposed budget: since 1941, individual income taxes, as a percent of federal funds, have risen from 15% to 45%, while corporate income tax's share has fallen from 24% to 9%. Excise taxes have dropped from 29% to 4%.

And from Citizens for Tax Justice: Poor people in most states cough up nearly twice the percentage of their income in state and local taxes as the affluent do. The middle class pays a third larger percentage.

According to Democratic consultant Vic Fingerhut, national health insurance is so popular that if the Republicans were to come out for it, they would carry over half the Democrats with them. His survey found that 76% of Americans agreed "the time is long past for a program of national health insurance in which American pays and every American is covered, just like Social Security and Medicare.'"

Fingerhut, an advocate of a strong populist approach in Democratic campaigning, notes that when Dukakis moved towards populism in the closing days of his campaign, he rose ten percentage points in the polls. Says Fingerhut, if Dukakis could do it, think what someone else could do.

The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce is looking for a part time "professional guest" to deliberately get angry with local hotel and restaurant staffs. "Mr. Angry," as he is dubbed, would than prepare reports on each case to encourage better treatment of Cleveland customers.

Censored story department: It appears possible that Jimmy Carter was the target of an assassination attempt last June. The incident occurred during a lunch break at a Habitat project in Miami. A volunteer worker's head was grazed by a bullet from a drive-by shooting. The media downplayed the story and said that Carter was working a block away. What the stories didn't say, and our sources do, is that Carter had been standing in the lunch line shortly before the incident and was of similar build and wearing much the same clothes as the man who was hit.

There's been a stunning lack of media attention to the Kuwaiti oil fires as late so you may not have seen that scientists have found the "fingerprints" from the Gulf fires in smoke above Wyoming.

A recent issue of the *Realist* quotes an Indian who thinks that Gandhi and Martin Luther King failed because they aimed too high. His proposal is to set a more reasonable ethical goal for nations, to wit that they strive towards the moral standards of the Mafia. By way of example, the Iraqi Massacre would have been avoided under such a paradigm by the simple use of hitmen. As this pragmatic philosopher points out, the Mafia does not generally kill innocent by-



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standers. in the course of achieving its ends.

Elsewhere in this issue, we discuss the Senate's role in confirmation. One important point -- but ancillary to that article -- is that the Senate has also failed to insist on confirming all top officials as the Constitution requires. For starters, the head of the National Security Council and the White House chief of staff surely should require confirmation -- especially if they are going to, as has become the case, supplant the entire cabinet. There is the further questions, albeit not a constitutional one, of whether we even need a chief of staff. Look at the record: Sherman Adams, Alexander Haig, Bob Haldeman, Donald Regan, John Sununu. As Albert Einstein once said, insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different result.

# Feedback

To a reader in Baltimore: it is true that we spelled Antietam wrong in a recent issue. But at least we don't send anonymous postcards.

Another reader points out that William Odom's name is spelled that way and now with a *u* as we had it. No reader, however, has pointed out our most egregious error of late, namely that the line *We don't have time for that* comes from the movie **Airplane!** and not **Airport.**

We appreciate the design for a new American flag sent us that would include 26 stars for the constitutional amendments and seven stripes for the articles, as well as the legend *We the People.*

This is an ecologically sound concept that can be created by retrofitting existing flags. You paint 24 of the stars blue and cut the stripes, resewing them together red to red and white to white. Given the difficulties we are having in getting anyone to read the Constitution, however, we are not sanguine about the potential for getting them to actually salute it.

We seem to be getting the reputation of a depository for reforms of all stripes. For example, we have in hand a proposal for "A Superior Form of Democracy," according to which all candidates would be required to submit 100-word essays to the League of Women Voters. The League would publish the winning essays anonymously "enabling voters to make their initial assessments solely on the basis of ideas." On Labor Day the identities would be revealed and the campaign would commence.

Novel as this plan is, we tend to prefer the current practice in Oregon which distributes a voters' manual in which each candidate gets a page to use as they want.

# Just politics

Here are addresses for some of the more progressive candidates running for president or thinking about it.

**Larry Agran**
Agran for President '92
PO Box 159
Irvine CA 92650
*Agran is the ex-mayor of Irvine, CA, who is running a campaign that focuses on America's city's and their problems. The man makes a good deal of sense and deserves more attention that he has received to date.*

**Jerry Brown**
Brown Exploratory Comm.
8075 West Third St. #402
Los Angeles, CA 90048
213-954-1992
*In a letter to potential supporters, Brown quoted Vaclav Havel: "I favor anti-political politics, that is, politics not as the technology of power and manipulation, of cybernetic rule over humans or as the art of the useful, but politics as practical morality, as service to the truth, as essentially human and humanly measured care for our fellow humans."*

**Tom Harkin**
Americans for Harkin
PO Box 2308
Washington DC 20013
202-547-9192
*See item elsewhere in this issue concerning Harkin.*

**Jesse Jackson**
1110 Vermont Ave NW
Wash DC 20005
202-728-1180
*At this writing, Jackson's political plans are unclear. The address above is that of the Rainbow Coalition, which he heads.*

**Bob Kerrey**
245 2nd St NE (3rd floor)
DC 20002
202-546-0433
*At this writing, Kerrey had not announced his plans. The address above is that of his Senate re--election campaign.*

**Eugene McCarthy**
McCarthy '92
PO Box 2008
Wash DC 20013-2008
*At this writing, McCarthy was discussing a possible candidacy.*

# Field notes

**Families Against Mandatory Minimums:** FAMM is a new organization fighting against the grotesque requirement created by Congress and the White House that judges give sentences of a predetermined length to those convicted of certain federal crimes. The law has provoked considerable opposition among federal judges; seven of the 11 federal courts of appeal have asked Congress to reconsider and at least one federal judge has resigned in protest. The law is having some of its most draconian effects on minor drug violators who get sentences of five to ten years in cases that might otherwise rate probation. FAMM is looking for members, especially those with relatives who are victims of the mandatory sentencing hysteria. FAMM, 2000 L St NW #702, DC 20036. 202-833-FAMM.



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**Banking Scandal:** The contrarianly named banking reform efforts in Congress are not getting even a fraction of the media attention they deserve. In essence, Congress is being asked to acquiesce to the same sort of regulatory laxity that led to the S&L debacle. One group that has been raising the alarm effectively is the Financial Democracy Campaign,which has fact sheets, articles and reports available. *FDC, 522 8th St. SE, 2nd floor, DC 20003. 202-547-9292.*

**The March to War:** A series of articles on the beginnings and end of the Iraqi Massacre, edited and introduced by James Ridgeway. *$9.95 Four Walls Eight Windows, PO Box 546, Village Station, NYC NY 10014.*

**Geno: The Life and Mission of Geno Baroni:** Catholic priest, civil rights and ethnic activist, and a member of the Carter administration, Baroni was an admirable and influential force in Washington during the '60s & '70s. Journalist Lawrence O'Rourke has written this bio. *$11.95. Paulist Press*

**Thwarting Telemarketers:** A new group, Private Citizen Inc., has launched a campaign against telemarketers. Along with a list of its members and their phone numbers, it sends a notice to firms warning that "I am unwilling to allow your free use of my time and telephone. *** I will accept junk calls for a $100 fee, due within 30 days of purchase." A few companies have actually sent in the $100. Others have had it dragged out of them in court. ATT is currently fighting the claim. Some members claim junk calls drop 75% after joining Private Citizen. Annual fee is $20. *[Private Citizen, Box 233, Naperville, Ill 60566.]*

**Taking on the House:** In the last issue we proposed a voting rights suit against the House of Representatives for discrimination against minorities because of the manner of electing representatives and, further, enlarging the House to make it more representative. . We have since learned that the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs is preparing a report on arguments and strategies for increasing the size of the House. *[NCUEA, Cardinal Station, Box 20, DC 20064. 202-232-3600.]*

## Contacts

***Here are the addresses of some of the organizations mentioned in this issue:***

**Commission for Responsive Democracy of NOW:** 1000 16th St. NW #700, DC 20036 202-331-0068

**The Greens**, PO Box 30208, Kansas City, MO 64112. 816-931-9366.

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